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ABSTRACT

This handbook provides educators with a step-by-step guide to partnering with parents. Introductory materials include research findings and beliefs about parent involvement in schools and a checklist to determine if the educator is ready to develop a partnership with parents. The eight steps to a parent/school partnership follow. Step 1, define why you want parents as partners, lists student, educator, and parent benefits. Step 2 offers suggestions to gain high-level commitment. Step 3, clarify what the partners need from the partnership, makes recommendations for designing a parent questionnaire and provides a sample parent needs assessment. Step 4, create a parent involvement advisory team, includes a membership grid that lists the groups to be represented and leaves spaces for suggested representatives and those recruited. Step 5 considers elements for success: written policies, administrative support, training, partnership approach, two-way communication, networking, and evaluation. Step 6, successful parent involvement strategies, presents a framework for organizing successful strategies for improving schools in which parents take on these roles: teachers, decision makers, supporters, advocates, and learners. Sample materials for parents are provided. Step 7 offers a checklist for developing and implementing a parent involvement plan using the parent involvement advisory team. Step 8 provides a program evaluation flowchart. Contains four examples of parent/educator programs and a list of 41 references. (YLB)

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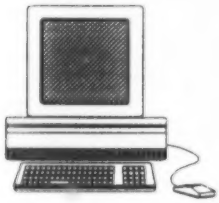
CREATING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS
to Improve Schools
A Handbook for Educators



Developed by the Iowa Council on Vocational Education
June, 1996

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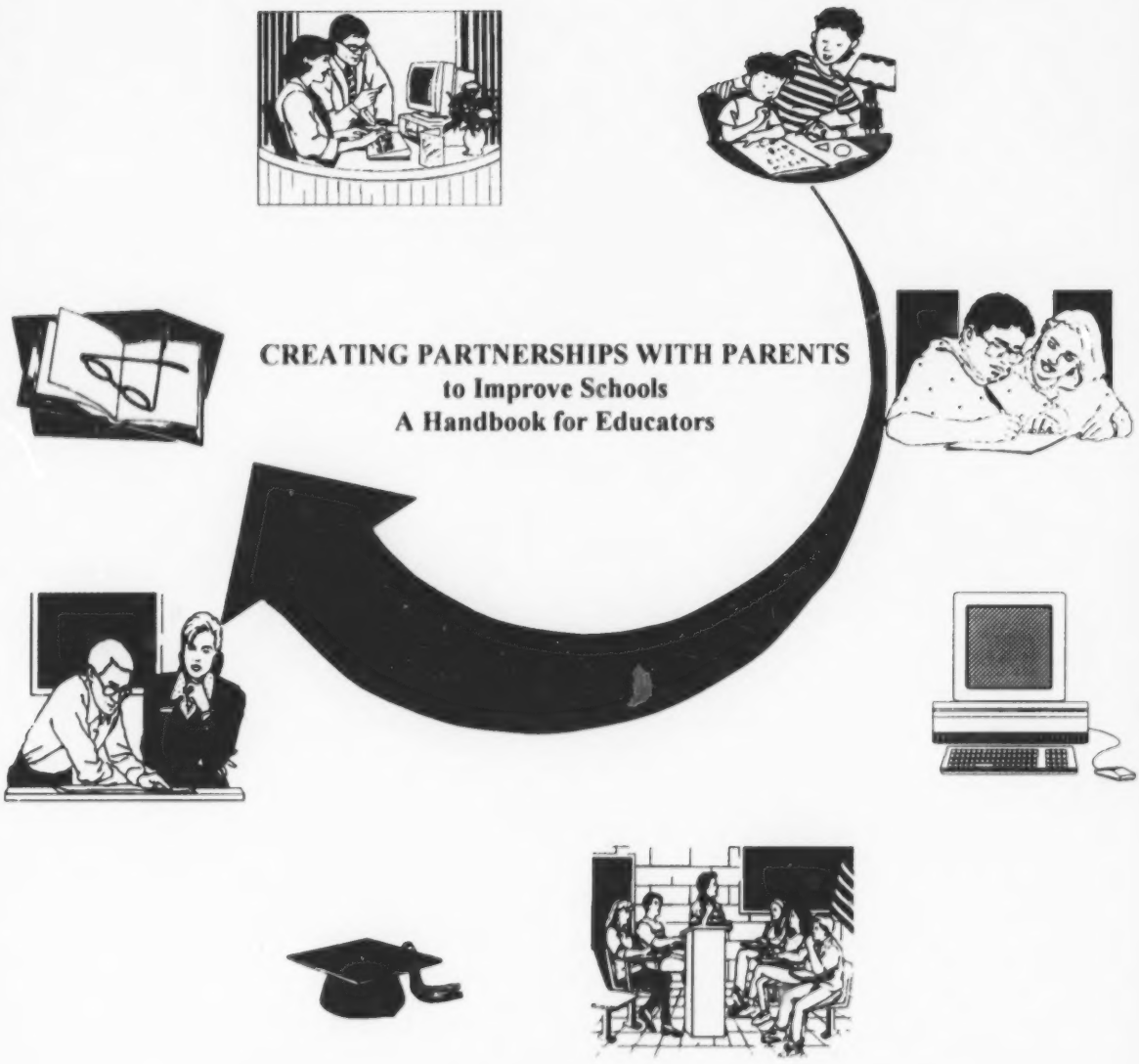

CREATING PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS
to Improve Schools
A Handbook for Educators

Developed by the Iowa Council
on Vocational Education
June, 1996

Taking into consideration the different composition of today's families, the use of "parent" and "family" in this Handbook is defined in its broadest terms.

The Iowa Council on Vocational Education is a private-sector-led citizens advisory council. Members are appointed by the Governor and represent business, industry, labor, agriculture, and education. The primary responsibility of the council is to advise the Governor, the State Board of Vocational-Technical Education, and the business community on policies and initiatives that should be undertaken to strengthen and improve vocational-technical education.

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Special thanks go to the members of the Council and staff for their input to this project.

My thanks also to Jodi Fenton, a student at East High School, Des Moines, for her creativity, hard work, and enthusiasm.

AN EDUCATOR/PARENT PARTNERSHIP SUCCESS STORY

Josh Burke was a young child with problems in school. He had difficulties focusing on his studies and completing his class assignments. Josh was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder and hyperactivity. He was placed in a special classroom and remained there for six years. Josh and his parents became increasingly angry about his situation. The educators were following the school's policies and procedures and did what they thought was best for Josh. Nothing they did seemed to work.

The breakthrough came when Josh was in fifth grade. He told his parents, "I wish I was in a wheelchair and then everyone would recognize my disability." To Josh's parents, Gwynne and Bill, this was a revelation. Josh did not have an attitude problem but had a disability. From that point on, Josh and his parents worked together to address the disability issue.

At this time, the relationship with the school system began to improve as the approach became one of active partnership. With the guidance of Mr. Beaman in junior high school and improved communication with Josh's teachers in high school, Josh experienced increasing success. The educators and Josh's parents were in continual communication, trying to find more effective ways for him to learn. "We called Josh's resource teacher, Mrs. Overton, all the time with questions and concerns. She listened. Together we tried different ways to help Josh learn." Mr. and Mrs. Burke, Josh and Mrs. Overton worked as a team. "It wasn't until we moved away from an 'us against them' approach that we were able to truly partner with the school. That's when we saw such improvement in Josh's learning."

Josh Burke was recently selected as one of two winners of the 1996 Very Special Arts Panasonic Young Soloists Award. This national award is given annually to musically gifted students with disabilities.

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UNITY

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.

One was a teacher - the tools he used
Were books, music, and art.
The other, a parent, worked with a guiding hand,
and a gentle heart.

Day after day, the teacher toiled with touch
That was deft and sure,
While the parent labored by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.

And when at last, their task was done
They were proud of what they had wrought,
For the things they had molded into the child
Could neither be sold nor bought.

And each agreed they would have failed
If each had worked alone.
For behind the teacher stood the school
And behind the parent, the home.

-Anonymous

Introduction

WHAT IS A PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP?

A partnership is an agreement between two or more people or groups of people who have a common goal and work together on mutually beneficial activities. The partners contribute different perspectives, skills, and resources to the partnership and through their combined efforts achieve much more to benefit students than could be gained by parents or school personnel acting separately.

WHY SHOULD WE WANT TO CREATE PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS?

The changes in education that are happening through initiatives such as School-to-Work, School Improvement and Goals 2000, cannot be achieved by educators alone. The task of change is too complex for one entity to address. Education of our young people is a community responsibility, not simply the role of the educator. Also, research strongly indicates that parents' involvement in their children's education results in higher levels of student success. Hence, parent involvement is crucial not only in the change process but for increasing student achievement.

HOW IS THIS HANDBOOK GOING TO HELP?

It is a challenge to discover the key to motivating parents to partner with schools, particularly as students reach the middle and upper grade levels. Parents are vital partners in the implementation of School-to-Work and by identifying successful strategies for their involvement, all students will be the beneficiaries.

This Handbook takes a step-by-step approach for educators to follow as they begin to partner with parents. The School-to-Work initiative, because of its characteristics, becomes a driving force for parent involvement in their student's education.

What the Research Shows About Parent Involvement

- Parents are a critical factor in student success in school. Children, whose parents are involved, do better and stay in school longer than those children with non-involved parents.
- Parents help their children's education when they take on five roles: as teacher, decision maker, supporter, advocate, and learner.
- Parents who are involved influence not only their own children but other children in the school.
- Parents need to be involved in their student's education at all levels.
- Parent involvement programs should be designed to also meet the needs of parents.
- Schools need to develop a clearer focus for parent involvement and should include specific policies and a systematic approach.
- Educators must gain a greater understanding of family differences, values, and cultures in order to better help their students to learn.
- Parents should be viewed and treated as **full** partners with educators in the education of their children.

Secondary school teachers don't know the parents of their students very well. They know the parents of outstanding students or those who get into trouble. The more students you teach, the more difficult it is to reach all parents.

Dr. Judy Richardson, Director, Community Education
Des Moines Public Schools

Underlying Beliefs About Parent Involvement in Schools

- That parents want what is best for their children.
- What is best for students cannot be achieved by educators alone.
- In order for schools to improve, parents must be positively engaged in partnering.
- All students, kindergarten through post-secondary, should be involved in planning, preparation, and development for school improvement.
- All students need continuing parental involvement in their education whether they are in kindergarten, high school or post secondary education.
- All parents can make a valuable contribution to their students, other students, and other parents' growth and development.
- Parents are the primary educators of their children.
- Parents and schools as partners working together can educate students to be successful.
- Parents know their children better than anyone else.

Children's growth and development benefit from a sense of partnership between the parent and the school.

Joyce Epstein

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Are You Ready to Develop an In-depth Partnership with Parents?

- [x] **Have you identified the need for parents to be involved in improving your school?**
- [x] **Do you believe the school board and administrators are willing to support your efforts?**
- [x] **Do you have individuals representing all stakeholders who would be ready to spend time and energy to develop and implement a plan for parent involvement in improving your school?**
- [x] **Are there adequate resources to finance your strategies?**
- [x] **Have you considered any of the barriers you might encounter?**
- [x] **Have you collected data that shows how many parents are currently involved, how they are active, and the amount of time they have committed?**
- [x] **Would community organizations and businesses be willing to show their support for your initiative?**
- [x] **Would the investment of time and resources into a parent involvement initiative be cost effective?**

Step 1

Define Why You Want Parents as Partners

STUDENT BENEFITS

- The school climate improves because of the spirit of cooperation that is generated by teachers and parents working together for the benefit of students.
- Students are more motivated to learn when their parents are engaged as partners with educators.
- Students achieve higher grades and test scores and long term academic accomplishments.
- Students have a better attitude about school.
- Students and parents improve their relationship by working together.
- Students are assisted in careful planning for their future.

EDUCATOR BENEFITS

- Educators realize that parents as partners are a financial asset. Parents can spend more time with the students than the teachers can.
- Parents and families who are involved in education programs are much more likely to show support for the school when it seeks funding or other resources from the community.
- Educators can no longer provide all the needed educational services alone. Parents and the whole community must be involved.
- Parents partnering with schools share accountability for activities that are jointly partnered.
- By involving parents in School-to-Work activities educators gain a variety of perspectives that result in the generation of more ideas from which to choose operational strategies.
- Teachers gain more job satisfaction when (a) children come to school prepared to learn, (b) parents can provide help in the classroom, and (c) parents give children support at home by working with them on activities such as homework and reading.

step 1 cont.

PARENT BENEFITS

- Parent attitudes towards school become more positive. Parents can better relate to the challenges facing educators as a direct result of their involvement in the schools.
- Parents who are involved in education are better informed about current issues and can help their students make well informed decisions about the classes they choose in order to forward their career aspirations.
- Parents can gain a sense of empowerment through their involvement, which can affect their lives beyond school.
- By emphasizing the concept of parents as teachers, parents' self confidence and self esteem will increase.
- Parents who are actively involved in school programs are more likely to have positive views of teachers.
- Parents involved in their children's schooling can develop their own skills in decision making, leadership, and communication.

As a parent you have to work with your children in preparing them for a career. We assume that students can handle it on their own, but all students need support and guidance in making decisions about their future.

Deb Samson, Parent Educator Connection

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Step 2

Gain High Level Commitment

- Share with your school superintendent why you believe Parent/School partnerships are so important. Substantiate your remarks with research findings.
- Recruit several key community members/parents to join you in your efforts to develop the partnerships.
- Request a place on the school board agenda to present your group position.
- Remember to cite examples of exemplary programs and the benefits to be gained from getting parents more involved in improving their schools.
- Gain the board's support of the Parent/School partnership concept.
- Keep the board informed as the program plans begin to take shape.
- Return to the board when the plan, together with a budget, has been formed and request any support that is needed.
- Assist the board to formulate a policy that encourages parent participation, make clear the expectations, and promise the needed resources for implementation.

Sample of a Policy for Parent Involvement

Members of the School District are expected to:

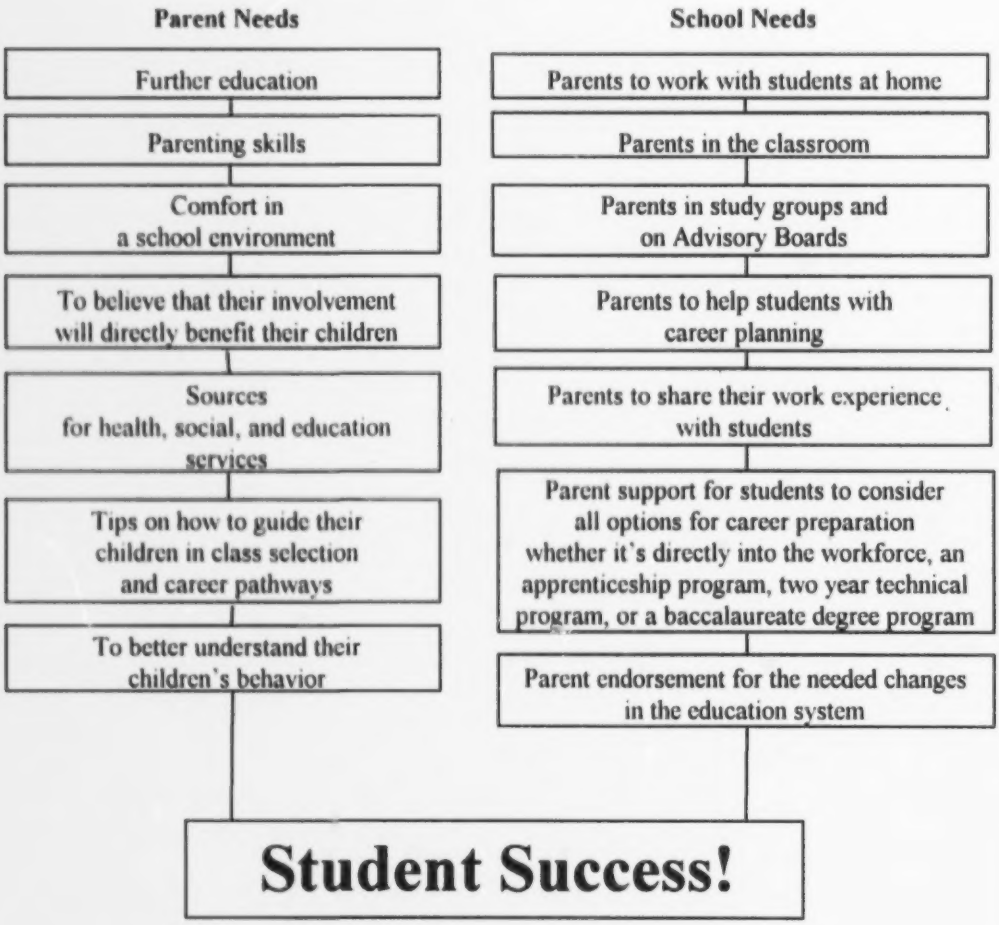
- Involve parents as partners in all decision making.
- Ensure two-way communication occurs.
- Create opportunities for parents to be actively involved in their children's education.
- Support and coordinate parent involvement projects.
- Connect students and families to community resources.

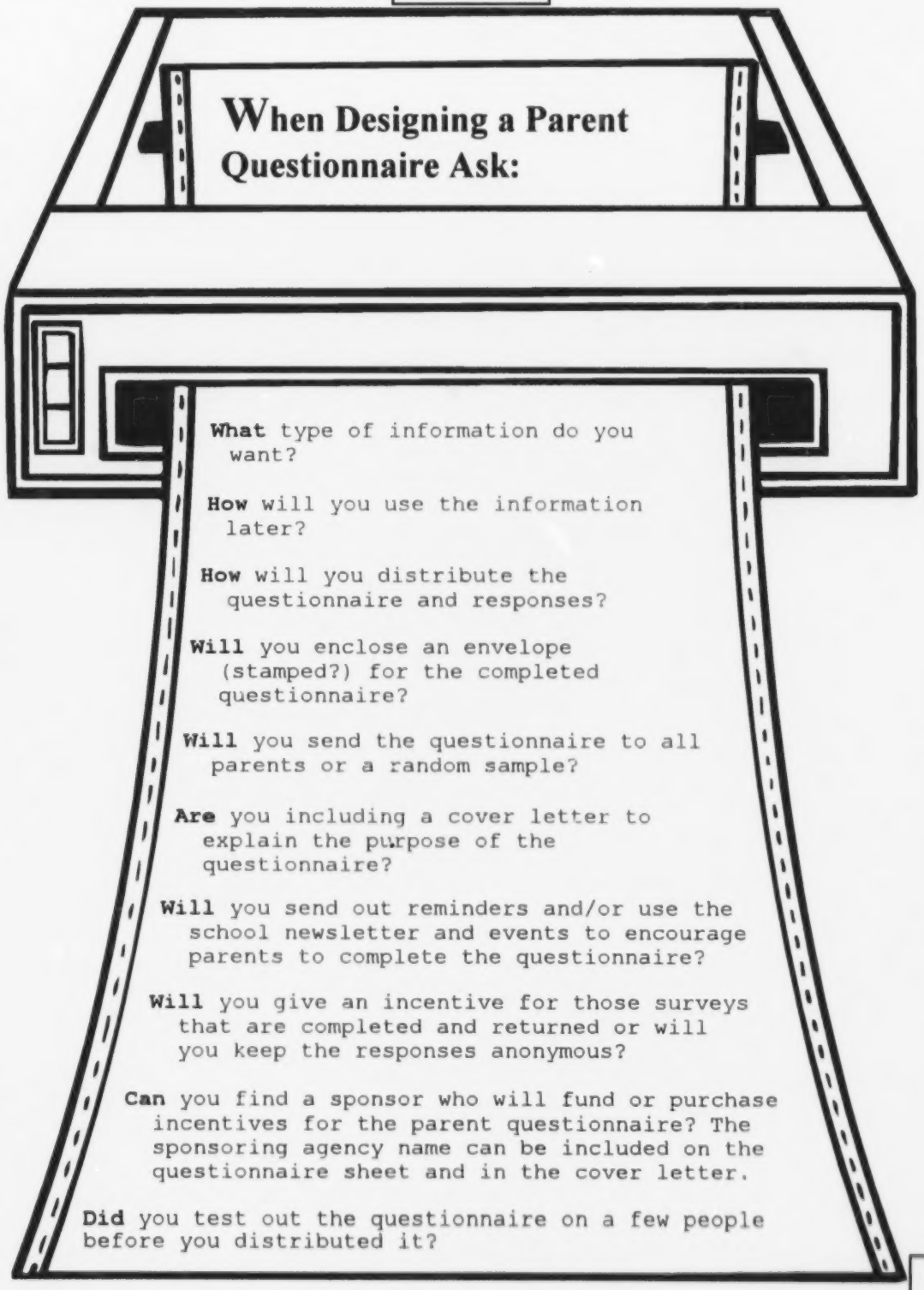
Adapted from San Diego School District

Step 3

Clarify What the Partners Need from the Partnership

A parent needs assessment must be conducted early on in the planning process. The aim is to identify needs that the school can help to meet. If the school can develop or extend services that meet parent needs, parents will be more willing to contribute their services to the school. A mutually beneficial arrangement could then be created. The needs assessment can also be used to establish baseline data which would be helpful in measuring the effectiveness of the Parent/School partnership.


Parent Needs
Further education
Parenting skills
Comfort in a school environment
To believe that their involvement will directly benefit their children
Sources for health, social, and education services
Tips on how to guide their children in class selection and career pathways
To better understand their children's behavior
School Needs
Parents to work with students at home
Parents in the classroom
Parents in study groups and on Advisory Boards
Parents to help students with career planning
Parents to share their work experience with students
Parent support for students to consider all options for career preparation whether it's directly into the workforce, an apprenticeship program, two year technical program, or a baccalaureate degree program
Parent endorsement for the needed changes in the education system
Student Success!



When Designing a Parent Questionnaire Ask:

What type of information do you want?

How will you use the information later?

How will you distribute the questionnaire and responses?

Will you enclose an envelope (stamped?) for the completed questionnaire?

Will you send the questionnaire to all parents or a random sample?

Are you including a cover letter to explain the purpose of the questionnaire?

Will you send out reminders and/or use the school newsletter and events to encourage parents to complete the questionnaire?

Will you give an incentive for those surveys that are completed and returned or will you keep the responses anonymous?

Can you find a sponsor who will fund or purchase incentives for the parent questionnaire? The sponsoring agency name can be included on the questionnaire sheet and in the cover letter.

Did you test out the questionnaire on a few people before you distributed it?

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Parent Needs Assessment

SAMPLE

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

We believe that parents and schools should be partners in providing quality education for students. We also believe that for such a partnership to be successful, each of the partners must benefit from the arrangement. We need to identify how the school can be of service to you. When you complete and return this form, we will send you two tickets to a school activity of your choice.

Please circle the appropriate response.

1. I am a regular visitor at the school.	once a week	once a month	once a semester	never
2. I know my child's teachers.	well	somewhat	a little	not at all
3. I am involved in my child's education.	a lot	somewhat	a little	not at all
4. I have heard about the need for schools to improve.	Yes	No		
5. I know the importance of working with my student on career decision-making.	Yes	No		

---

6. Would you be interested in the following activities? Please rate the activities on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=not interested at all; 5=highly interested)

a. Earning a high school diploma _____
b. Developing discipline strategies _____
c. Recognizing substance abuse _____
d. Parent/child communication _____
e. Helping my child with career planning _____
f. Developing good parenting skills _____
g. Dealing with problem behaviors _____
h. Enhancing computer skills _____
i. Joint student/parent classes _____
j. Joint student/parent leisure activities _____

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7. What other ideas do you have about the services the school could provide to you?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please return your completed survey to the school by _____. To show our appreciation, we will mail you two tickets to the activity you choose from the list below to show our appreciation.

Check which function you would like to attend:

Concerts:

- ☐ **choir**
- ☐ **jazz band**
- ☐ **orchestra**
- ☐ **Drama**

Athletics:

- ☐ **football**
- ☐ **baseball**
- ☐ **volleyball**
- ☐ **cross country**
- ☐ **basketball**
- ☐ **track**

Name_____

Address_____

Phone #_____

So that confidentiality is ensured, your name and address will be detached from this form before your responses are tallied.

Step 4

Create a Parent Involvement Advisory Team

- Consider who should be included.
- Decide how many members you would like on the team.
- Target individuals who are influential.
- Decide when and how long you should meet.
- Clearly define the purpose of the team.
- Complete the Membership Grid below.
- Ask people to join you with a specific role for them in mind to play.
- Ensure at least 50% of Team members are parents.

Groups to be Represented	Suggested Representatives	Representatives Recruited
PTA/Booster Club/Organized Parent Group		
Parents from Business		
Parents from Government		
Parents of Special Education Student		
Parents of Talented & Gifted Student		

Groups to be Represented	Suggested Representatives	Representatives Recruited
Parents of an Elementary Student		
Parents of a Middle School Student		
Parents of a High School Student		
Labor		
Teachers		
Administrators		
Students		
Community		

Step 5

Consider Seven Elements for Success*

Written policies. The programs had written policies that showed parent involvement was viewed as an important component.

Administrative support. Administrative support was provided in at least three ways: funds were made available in the district office budget; materials, space, and equipment were available; people were designated to carry out programs.

Training. Promising programs made ongoing training available for staff as well as parents.

Partnership approach. There was joint planning, goal setting, etc. Both parents and staff developed a sense of ownership.

Two-way communication. Communication between home and school occurred on a regular basis. Parents felt comfortable coming to school, sharing ideas, and voicing concerns.

Networking. Promising programs networked with other programs to share information and resources.

Evaluation. Regular evaluation activities were included at key stages as well as at the conclusion of a phase or cycle.

* Taken from Iowa Department of Education, " Parent Involvement in Education: A Resource for Parents, Educators, and Communities," which was based on work by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Step 6

Successful Parent Involvement Strategies

According to research, the most effective way to approach parent involvement is by offering a broad array of options that invite parents to take on a variety of roles. Parents as **teachers**, **decision makers**, **supporters**, **advocates**, and **learners**, as described by Epstein, will be the framework used for organizing successful strategies for improving our schools.

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

A learning home environment is created where school work is reinforced and skills and values leading to fulfilling and productive lives are taught. Parents must be encouraged to be teachers to their children.

Strategies	Partners Involved
Offer classes to parents and their students on topics such as career development, creating a portfolio, understanding adolescence, family communication.	Counselor, community, education, or School-to-Work coordinator
Invite parents to use the resources they have at home to supplement school activities, e.g. their skills, books, and computer.	Teacher, Counselor
Teachers send tips home to parents on how they can help with particular projects.	Teacher

PARENTS AS TEACHERS

Strategies	Partners Involved
Set up study groups to develop preventative measures for addressing negative student behaviors.	Counselor
Send home to parents a step-by-step guide so they can help their students analyze career interests and abilities, discuss various career possibilities and explore specific career pathways.	Counselor, School-to-Work Coordinator
Encourage parents to confer with their children's teachers on a regular basis to clarify what areas of the curriculum they can reinforce at home.	Teacher
Encourage parents to discuss with their children opportunities for careers in non-traditional occupations.	Counselor
Invite parents to attend teacher inservice programs	Principal
Invite parents to learn about the career resources available in the counselor's office, e.g. computerized resources, interest inventories, and portfolios.	Counselor
Invite parents to be mentors to students who are interested in pursuing careers in their area of work.	Counselor
Invite parents to collaborate to help students develop their individualized career plan.	Counselor/Teachers
Invite parents to attend a full day of school with their students.	Principal
Use "Your Student's Career Options" sheets for parents to use with their students.	Counselor

SAMPLE

Student/Parent/Counselor Meeting to discuss Career Options

Before the Meeting:

- Contact student about a meeting with parent(s) and counselor.
- Student completes an interest inventory or uses a computerized career exploration program to determine areas of interest. (Ideally, student will have been involved in a career development program since the earliest grades in school and created an ongoing career portfolio.)
- Send parents an invitation to meet to discuss with their student an individualized career plan. Include a check-off sheet of items to consider before the meeting and a copy of Parent's Guide to Career Development (Wisconsin Career Information System).

During the Meeting:

- Student shares results of career exploration and discusses career dreams. Student uses portfolio developed over several years of career development activities. e.g. "Get a Life" developed by NOICC.
- Parent(s) express their thoughts based on the responses to the check-off sheet prepared before the meeting.
- Counselor provides information on the wide range of opportunities open to the student including apprenticeship programs, two year and four year degree programs, entering the work force directly from school, careers in the military, and personal service projects such as the Peace Corps.

Following the Meeting:

- Student develops personal career goals and creates an action plan.
- Parents and counselor review the plan and make suggestions for improvement.
- Student, parent(s), and counselor meet periodically to discuss the student's career development activities.

Your Student's Career Options

We would like to invite you and your student to meet at _____ to discuss his/her career development plans.

With regard to your student, please consider the following areas prior to our meeting so that we may discuss appropriate career opportunities for him/her.

- ☐ ***skills and abilities***
- ☐ ***taking responsibility***
- ☐ ***study/work habits***
- ☐ ***hobbies/leisure activities***
- ☐ ***career dreams you have for your student***
- ☐ ***relationships with others***
- ☐ ***where your student needs help in career planning***

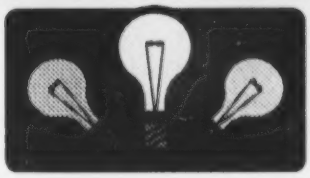
PARENTS AS DECISION-MAKERS

Parents are involved in decision making as members of advisory groups, management teams, and study groups. They are active participants throughout the education system. Decision-making groups include an equal number of participative parents and educators.

Strategies	Partners Involved
Recruit parents as members for advisory groups. They must be identified and personally recruited for the particular interest and skills they will bring to the group. The groups must meet at times when parent schedules permit.	School-to-Work coordinator
As key issues arise at school, invite parents to join educators for study group discussions. Again, the group should be focused and results oriented.	Principal
Seek parent input for the development of the budget and school district policies. A personal invitation is more effective than a mass mailing.	Superintendent, Principal
Recruit parents to assist educators in developing a community-wide assessment of educational activities.	School-to-Work Coordinator
Encourage parents to collaborate with educators to create a Career Day so students can be exposed to a broad array of career options.	Counselor/Parent

SAMPLE

Invitation to Parents



We Need Your Bright Ideas!

WHAT? Join school personnel and other selected community members for a school planning session.

WHEN? Tuesday July 7th 6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

WHERE? E.P. Jones High School Library

HOW? A skilled facilitator will lead us through a series of participative activities in order to:

-clarify the role of the school
-define key issues affecting the school
-generate ideas to address the issues

YOUR input will be used in the E.P. Jones High School comprehensive plan. Please plan to attend this important event.

Call _____ to reserve your place. Dessert and coffee will be served.

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PARENTS AS SUPPORTERS

Parents provide services to the schools based on their skills and experiences.

Strategies	Partners Involved
Invite parents to visit classrooms to talk about their work environment, the specifics of their jobs, the opportunities for advancement, and the skills needed to be successful in a particular career field.	Teacher
Ask parents to take their children to work to show how the workplace operates and the demands of the job.	Principal/Counselor
Recruit parents as volunteers. Parents make a valuable contribution by being classroom volunteers. They provide assistance by using certain talents. Simultaneously, they see the teacher modeling behaviors they can use in their teacher role with their children.	Teacher
Ask parents, who are employed by various businesses and government, community and labor organizations, to use their influence to create work-based experiences for students at their worksites.	School-to-Work Coordinator, Counselor
Ask parents with skills and experience in a particular curriculum area to team teach a class with a teacher.	Teacher
Ask parents employed in non-traditional occupations (e.g. female plumber, male nurse) to participate in a panel presentation to students.	School-to-Work Coordinator/Counselor
Invite parents to talk to students about the challenges and benefits of being an entrepreneur	School-to-Work Coordinator/Counselor

PARENTS AS SUPPORTERS

Parents provide services to the schools based on their skills and experiences.

Strategies	Partners Involved
Invite parents to act as mentors to their own and other students, as they engage in work-site experiences.	Counselor
Ask parents to be part of a skills resource bank. Parents with particular skills such as computer technology, writing, design, and carpentry would be contacted by teachers to complement their classroom activities.	School-to-Work coordinator
Invite parents, who trained for their careers through apprenticeship programs, to share their experiences with students.	Teacher/Counselor
Train parents to work with teachers to make home visits.	Teachers
Ask parents who have been involved in the school's activities to write a parent column for the school newspaper.	School Newspaper Editor
Invite parents to help students with reading or mathematics, to help create bulletin boards and other ongoing activities in the classroom.	Volunteer Coordinator, Teachers

A school's parent involvement practices were a more important indicator of the likelihood of parent involvement than was the socio-economic status of parents.

Rebecca Crawford Burns

Creston's kids need YOU!

Introducing VIA – Volunteers in Action...

In today's changing society an increasing number of our students have special needs. They are at risk of failing in school. Often, this can result in other failures in the future. VIA has been created in the Creston Community schools to help all our students – particularly those at risk – meet their full potential.

Opportunities for service with VIA...

There are scores of ways you can help today's students through VIA. You can read to students, share vacation pictures, monitor the playground, help a teacher with clerical duties, teach your favorite craft, create a bulletin board, help in the library, talk about your career, and help in the lunchroom. Perhaps you can suggest a way you can help. No degree or experience is necessary. Training will be provided.

Your rewards...

VIA's rewards are not monetary, but they are many. You will have opportunities to learn, to meet new people, to learn new skills and to share ideas across the generations. And you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have made a positive difference in the lives of the students you touch.

For more information or to sign up for *Volunteers in Action*, call 782-7028.
Creston's kids need you!

VIA

Volunteers In Action

Helping Creston's students on the way to a better future!

PARENTS AS ADVOCATES

Parents speak out for the welfare of students and work to make the system more responsive to families. Once parents are actively engaged, they will become not only advocates for their students but also for the schools. The desired outcome from parents involved as advocates is for students to become advocates for themselves.

Strategies	Partners Involved
Invite and encourage parents to attend and speak out at board meetings through personal contact or by school newsletter. (A personal approach is the most effective.)	Superintendent, Principal
Invite parents to speak at faculty meetings on topics relating to personal or professional areas of skill and interest. This is particularly useful for keeping faculty abreast of changes in the workplace.	Principal
Develop a forum for parents to offer ideas to administrators about services affecting their students. Perhaps a quarterly forum in the evening or on a Saturday morning would generate parent interest and support. (see next page)	Principal, School-to-Work coordinator
Educate the parents about the services students can use in the school including career counseling, social services, special interest clubs etc. Communicate via the school newsletter or have a school representative available to answer questions at school sporting events and activities.	Principal

"As the child learns self determination skills, parent advocacy should be transcended by self-advocacy"

Self Determination Revisited: Going Beyond Expectations by Michael J. Ward Ph.D.

SAMPLE

Parents as Advocates
Quarterly Education Forum Check List

Assemble Forum planning team.

Define the topic.

Clarify how information from the Forum will be used.

Determine the format for the session: a panel, small groups, large group, facilitated activities, key note speaker?

Organize logistics: When and where will the event occur and who will be invited.

Invite parents to attend. Follow-up on the invitation with a phone call.

Include students on the invitation list.

Ensure there is a strong education contingency in attendance including the superintendent, principals, teachers, and counselors.

Contact the media about the event.

Write an article for the school newsletter about the forum. Recognize attendees for their participation.

PARENTS AS LEARNERS

If parents can be involved in education in the role of learner, the benefits are many, and they can gain personally and professionally. Through learning activities, they can be role models to their children. In addition, the parents will have a greater understanding of the important part that schools play in their children's education and will value their efforts.

Strategies	Party Responsible
Offer classes to parents for their own personal and professional development, e.g. Earning a High School Diploma, Improving Writing Skills.	Community education, partner with community college
Organize a Parent University in the evening or on a Saturday where parents can attend classes for personal and professional development. (See next page)	Community Education
Invite parents to use the school's resources to further their learning, e.g. the library, career assessment and development tools.	Counselor
Partner with businesses to provide parent employees with learning opportunities, e.g. developing writing and math skills.	School-to-Work Coordinator

When asked what is the most important thing public schools need to help students learn, "involved parents" received the top response.

Study conducted by Public Agenda Foundation April, 1996

More Ideas to Try When Creating Parent/Educator Partnerships

Marketing and Communication:

Publicize the link between parent involvement and student achievement.	Develop specific strategies to involve low-income and disadvantaged parents, who often times do not know **how** to become involved.
Establish a contact point for parents. Often they do not know who to approach at school with a question or a concern.	Provide mechanisms for increased communication because of the busy lives parents lead. Teacher/parent communication sends a message to students that a strong system for learning exists. Use the telephone, E-mail, newsletters, and notes to keep in touch. Explore the possibility of a voice messaging system so that parents can leave messages at any time.
Show parents how their involvement does result in positive change.	
Explain to parents all the educational terms with which they might not be familiar, e.g. School-to-Work, GED.	Use respected parent/community leaders to invite parent participation.
Identify local businesses and organizations where parents are employed. Ask for their help, through their internal communication system, by publicizing the need for parents and educators to partner.	Check other public places where you can leave fliers or make announcements about the need for parent involvement.
Organize a call-in talk show with a local radio station. Parents and community members could ask questions of an educator or a team of educators.	Invite the media to join you for special school improvement functions or to write about how you are meeting the challenge of getting parents to partner with educators.

Marketing and Communication cont.	Involve parents in a telephone network. Ask those who volunteer to call other parents to encourage their participation in school activities.
Schedule a community-wide event to kick off your parent/educator partnership.	Encourage ongoing parent/school/student communication. Don't wait for a student to have problems before communication channels are created.
Include parents from all socio-economic backgrounds so the often under-represented groups of low income families have a voice.	Invite parents to early morning breakfasts held at the school to report school activities and discuss current issues. This would be a good opportunity to gain ongoing parent input. Support on critical or controversial issues would be more apt to occur because of the relationship developed.
Partner with businesses to encourage their employees, who are parents, to take leadership roles in schools. Businesses may offer leadership workshops to employees who become school decision-makers.	
Be sensitive to the different family structures that exist. Consider how letters are addressed. "To the parents of..." is inappropriate for many families.	Encourage parent involvement by having teachers complete at least one weekly postcard to parents of students who have made a positive contribution during that week.
Get teachers and students involved in encouraging parent participation. Set up an incentive system to reward groups for the greatest number of parents in attendance.	RECOGNIZE, recognize, recognize both parents and teachers who develop partnerships that work!

Planning and Organization	Consider families **first** in your planning rather than as an afterthought to students and their needs.
Consider successful parent involvement programs in the early grades that can be redesigned for parents of older children.	Offer opportunities for involvement that can occur at home, e.g. helping with homework, requiring joint student/parent projects.
Parent involvement must be a designed part of any school improvement initiative.	The school board must endorse parent participation to underline its importance.
Consider organizing students in small, family-like groups with a teacher or advisor who would keep in continuous communication with the students' families.	Consider naming a parent coordinator to organize parent/school partnership activities. This person could also assist parents to work through their student-related problems and concerns.
Organize a Parent Teacher Association group at middle and high schools as a springboard for getting parents actively involved.	Create a Parent Hotline. Parents can call for information about school activities, homework assignments, and where to locate resources. The Hotline could also offer advice on parenting.
Create a Parent/Student Study Center where parents are encouraged to attend with their students to improve basic skills and to work together on career development activities. The Center could operate after school or on Saturday mornings.	Organize a Parent University so parents can acquire a better understanding of their children and some valuable strategies to improve parent/child interaction.
	Develop a family center or resource room where families can find the kind of support services they need and/or be referred to the appropriate agencies.

Planning and Organization cont.	Try special invitations to involve parents, such as a parent tea, meet the teacher night, and freshman parent orientation evening. Organize a grandparents' luncheon.
Provide child care which includes fun activities for the children.	

Environment	Organize some activities away from school. Some parents need to build their self confidence before they are comfortable in a school setting.
Create attractive and friendly signs to welcome parents into the school building.	Consider meeting with parents in their homes.
Create a welcoming culture in the school so that all employees, including teachers, cooks, librarians, custodians, and administrators, greet parents and make them feel comfortable.	Create a lounge area for parents where they can leave their personal belongings, study for projects or classes, examine resources, and meet educator partners.

Staff Development	Concentrate on building upon parental attributes rather than dwelling on the negative.
Train teachers and parents to view students in terms of their assets rather than negative or anti-social behaviors. By accentuating specific things that can help to prevent youth getting involved in at-risk behaviors, teachers and parents can surround youth with a healthy environment. (See the RespecTeen Report - The Troubled Journey.)	Work at better equipping teachers to collaborate with parents as teachers, supporters, advocates, decision-makers, and learners.
Other	Offer a wide range of options so single parents and working families can also be included.
Parents should be involved at all levels of their children's pre-school through post-secondary education. As students mature, increasing amounts of responsibility for decision making should be given to them.	Develop a contract that parents sign to indicate their commitment to involvement in their child's education.
Encourage parent/student classroom projects and school activities.	Provide incentives for students to bring parents to school functions, e.g. extra credit.

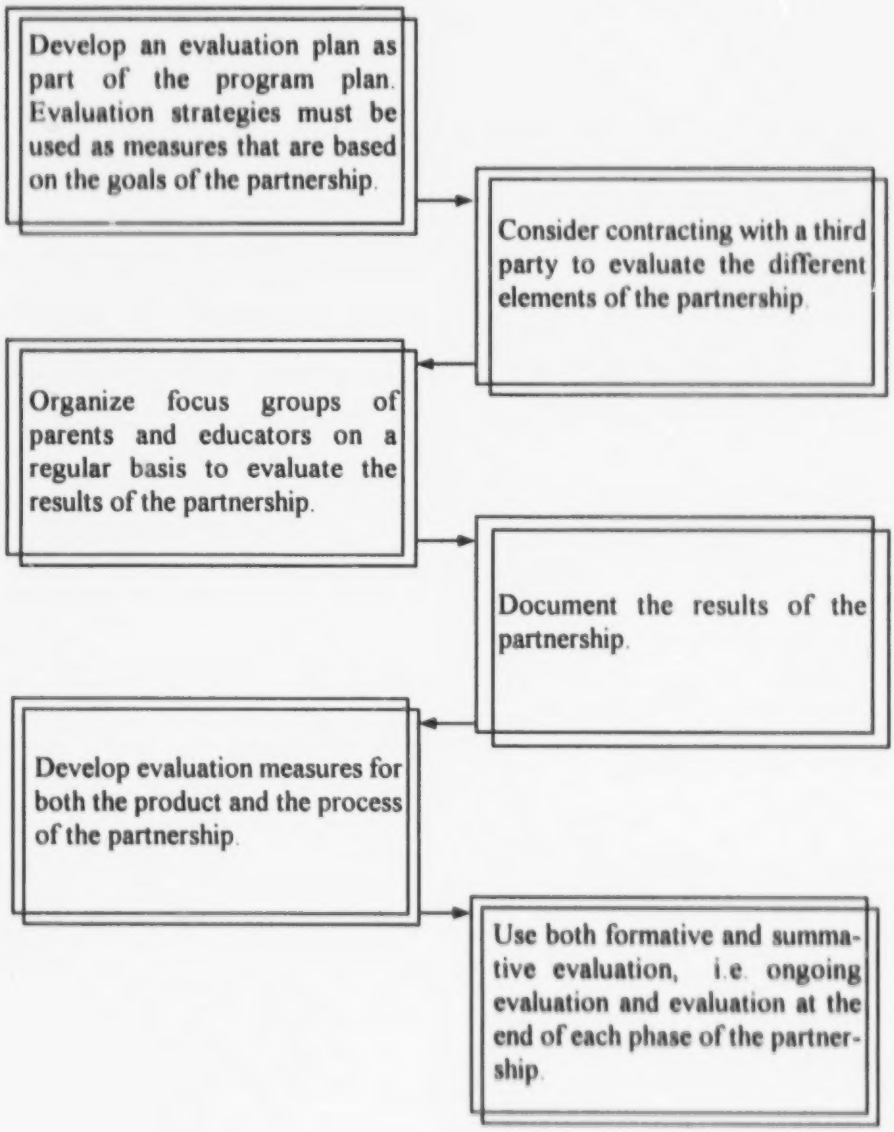
Step 7

Develop and Implement a Parent Involvement Plan Using the Parent Involvement Advisory Team

- ☑ Use this Handbook as a guide for the team.
- ☑ Set ground rules for Team meetings.
- ☑ Define the purpose of the Team.
- ☑ Clarify the Team's vision.
- ☑ Conduct internal and external surveys of conditions.
- ☑ Set goals and objectives.
- ☑ Use creative brainstorming techniques to generate activity ideas.
- ☑ List activities, indicating who will take primary responsibility, when the activity will be completed, how the activity will be accomplished, the resources needed, and how the activities will be evaluated.
- ☑ Provide ongoing team-building activities.
- ☑ Add members as additional expertise and representation are needed.
- ☑ Keep all stakeholders informed of the Team's progress.
- ☑ Report regularly to the school board.
- ☑ Continually evaluate the team's efforts.

Step 8

Evaluate the Program


Develop an evaluation plan as part of the program plan. Evaluation strategies must be used as measures that are based on the goals of the partnership.
Consider contracting with a third party to evaluate the different elements of the partnership.
Organize focus groups of parents and educators on a regular basis to evaluate the results of the partnership.
Document the results of the partnership.
Develop evaluation measures for both the product and the process of the partnership.
Use both formative and summative evaluation, i.e. ongoing evaluation and evaluation at the end of each phase of the partnership.

Examples of Parent/Educator Programs

These are a few of the excellent parent/educator programs that exist in Iowa. Many other collaborative efforts are in place and functioning effectively.

Improving Family-School Partnerships

This is a 30-hour workshop to help educators and parents improve their understanding of how to build family-school partnerships which result in improved learning opportunities for students. Participants will be organized into teams of 10 (5 educators and 5 parents). Each team will receive a mini-grant of $500 to put into practice what they have learned.

To sign up for the course by team, call Ron Mirr at (319) 354-5606. Training sites and times will be determined by the needs of the participants.

Iowa Parent Resource Center, 1025 Penkridge Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246.

Parent-Student Alliance

This program began four years ago in the Human Resources area at Principal Financial Group. The important part that parents play in their children's education was recognized. The Parent-Student Alliance was created to support employees in their role as partners with educators to provide their children's quality education. A committee of fifteen members meets monthly to oversee the program. Some of the activities are as follows:

1. In June, K-6th grade students tour the different facilities at Principal and visit with their parents to see what they do at work.
2. Students in 7th-12th grades have the opportunity to job shadow different positions at Principal.
3. Students are given an incentive gift at the beginning of the school year and one at the end of the year to encourage learning year round.
4. Parents send messages to the V.P. for Human Resources about their children's activities. Letters are sent to the students giving them encouragement and positive reinforcement.
5. The Learning Edge is a quarterly newsletter sent to parents at Principal Financial Group.

For more information call Mike Botts, Chair, Parent Student Alliance (515) 248-8755

School-to-Work, Marshalltown, Iowa

Activities for getting parents involved include:

1. Invite parents to a meeting for 9th graders in fall.
2. Include parents on all advisory committees.
3. Place articles in the media to keep parents informed.
4. Meet with parents and students as students enroll in School-to-Work activities.
5. Meet with parents, employees, and students when students are placed at a worksite.
6. Hold end of year recognition dinner for parents, students, and employers.

For further information contact Frank Sims, School-to-Work Coordinator
(515) 754-1130

Ankeny Family Advocacy Project

This program puts youth and their families in touch with community resources with the intent of improving their quality of life. The project partners youth, families, school, and community to prevent problem behaviors through education and recreational programs. The following list provides examples of some of the services offered:

1. Parent Education Workshops.
2. Family Communication Network - parents agree to their names and phone numbers being listed in a directory as a way to enhance communication. Support meetings are held. Educational opportunities, to increase internal family communication and clarify parent expectations for their students, are offered. Social activities are provided so families can get to know each other.
3. In-Home Counseling Program.
4. Promoting Gang Awareness and Building Family Communication Network.

For further information contact JulieAnn Redder, Project Coordinator
(515) 965-9608

Resources

- American Association of School Administrators, 1801 N. Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209. (703) 875-0730
- Area Education Agencies - wide range of resources on parent involvement including personnel with expertise books and videotapes.
- Center for the Study of Parent Involvement, 2544 Etna Street, Beverly, CA 94704.
- Community/Family Involvement Project, Heartland Area Education Agency, Jane Neff (515) 270-9030.
- Community Update, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Ave SW, Washington D.C. 20202. - newsletter with special insert on family development.
- Crawford Burns, Rebecca, Parents and Schools: From Visitors to Partners, 1993, National Education Association of the United States.
- Creating Our Future: Parents as Partners in Education, March, 1995 National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Families in Education, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 125 South Webster Street, P.O. Box 7841 Madison, WI 53707. (800) 243-8782
- Feldmeyer, Dean and Roehlkepartain, Eugene C., Parenting with a Purpose, 1995, Search Institute.
- Fruchter, Norm; Galletta, Anne; and White, Lynne J. New Directions in Parent Involvement, 1992, Academy for Educational Development, Inc.
- Gordon, Ira J., The Effects of Parent Involvement on Schooling from Partners: Parents and Schools, edited by Ronald S. Brandt, 1979, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Henderson, Anne. The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement, 1987, National Committee for Citizens in Education, Washington D.C.
- Henderson, Anne T. and Berla, Nancy. The Family is Critical to Student Achievement, 1994, National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Increasing Parent Involvement in Schools, April, 1992 National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- An Invitation to Your Community - Building Community Partnerships for Learning Goals 2000, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Ave., Washington D.C. 20202
- Iowa's Community Colleges - call the community college in your area and ask for the office that develops partnerships with the local schools.
- Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Vocational and Technical Education (515) 281-4702 and Bureau of Instruction and Curriculum, Community Education (515) 281-3290.

Resources

- Iowa State University, University Extension - many publications on children, families, and parenting. Contact your local Extension office.
- Lareau, Annette. Family-School Relationships: A View from the Classroom, September, 1989, Education Policy.
- Moving America to the Head of the Class: 50 Simple Things You Can Do. Education Excellence Partnership, 1615 L. Street NW, Suite 1100, Washington D.C. 20036. 1-800-USA-LEARN.
- National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE), Box 39, 1201 16th St. NW, Washington D.C. 20036.
- National Education Association, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516 - Publishes parent involvement articles and materials (800) 229-4200
- National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) - Extensive career development materials including "Get a Life Career Development Portfolio". In Iowa, ISOICC at (515) 242-4889
- New Iowa Schools Corporation, 1454 30th St., Suite 207A, West Des Moines, IA 50266, Jane Keairns (515) 226-9852
- Our Children's Education: What Parents Can Do, National Alliance of Business, 1201 New York Ave, NW, Suite 700, Washington D.C. 20005 (202) 289-2888
- Parents as Partners an Educational Imperative, November, 1994, Schools in the Middle, National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Parent-Educator Connection, Mountains Plains Regional Resource Center, Drake University - Provide educational services to children with special needs. (515) 271-3931 or (515) 271-3936
- Parent's Guide to Career Development, Wisconsin Career Information System, 1078 Educational Sciences, Unit 1, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison WI 53706 - Good resource for parents to use in conjunction with career development conference with student and counselor.
- The Parent Institute, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039 - newsletters, brochures, and videos on parent involvement (800) 229-4200
- Parent Teacher Association - Many valuable resources on parent involvement including A Leader's Guide to Parent and Family Involvement In Iowa, (515) 276-1019
- Reed Wikelund, Karen, Schools and Communities Together: A Guide to Parent Involvement - September 1990. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 101 SW Main, Suite 500, Portland, Oregon 97204 (503) 275-9500
- Rich, Dorothy Families and Schools: Teaming for Success, Agency for Instructional Technology and Phi Delta Kappa, 1995, - Comprehensive professional development workshop resource.

Resources

- Rioux, William J. and Berla, Nancy, Innovations in Parent and Family Involvement, Eye on Education, Inc. 1993.
- Stemmer, Paul; Brown, Bill; and Smith, Catherine, The Employability Skills Portfolio from Leadership. Journal of Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, March 1992, Vol. 49 #6, pg. 32-35.
- School-to-Work State and Regional Coordinators (515) 281-9037 or (515) 281-9044
- Stiles, John, The Unstudious American: Who's at Fault, Journal of Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, March 1992, Vol. 49 #6, pg. 61-63.
- Struck, John W., A Parent Handbook: Transition from School to Adult Life, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center and Iowa Department of Education - Handbook is in four sections and is geared towards adolescents with disabilities.
- Tech-Prep State and Regional Coordinators (515) 281-3544
- Todd, Timothy D., What is the Parent's Role? Journal of Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, March 1992, Vol. 49 #6, pg. 88-89.
- The Troubled Journey, RespecTeen, (800) 888-3820 - How to build assets in youth.
- Voices from School and Home, A report on Focus Group Discussions conducted by Jobs for the Future, Inc. (Arkansas, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin) (617) 628-6661